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AUTHOR Powers, Gerald W.
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ABSTRACT

A study of 13 hearing parents of children with deafness and 28 parents of children without disabilities (ages 5-12) was conducted to determine if there was a difference in parent involvement in their child's education. Parents were asked to complete a 23-question survey about their involvement in their child's education over the past year. No intergroup differences in parent involvement were demonstrated. The parents of children with deafness observed their children somewhat more in the classroom than did the parents of children without disabilities. The parents of children without disabilities volunteered in their children's classroom somewhat more than parents of children with deafness. Suggestions are offered for increasing parental involvement. (Author/CR)

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Parental Involvement: Deaf versus hearing children

by

Gerald W. Powers
Professor of Communication Disorders
Bloomsburg University
Bloomsburg, PA 17815
Tel.: 717-389-4119
FAX: 717-389-3980
E-mail: Powers@bloomu.edu

Jennifer Saskiewicz
Bucks County IU 22
Tel: 1-800-770-4822

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This study was conducted to determine if there was a difference in hearing parents' involvement in their deaf child's vs. their hearing child's education. Parents were asked to complete a twenty-three question survey about their involvement in their child's education over the past year. Neither group demonstrated a statistically significant difference in their involvement in their child's education. It was found that the parents of deaf children observed their children somewhat more in the classroom than the parents of hearing children. It was also found that the parents of the hearing children volunteered in their children's classroom somewhat more than the parents of deaf children.

Research Review

Research indicates that parental involvement plays a significant role in the education of children. There is little doubt that parents have a profound effect on the academic behavior of children (O'Connor, 1977). Parental involvement in their children's education can make critical contributions to student achievement (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Efforts to improve children's education are much more effective when the parents are actively involved. Therefore, it is essential that parents of both hearing and deaf children become involved in their children's education.

Over the past few years there has been a decrease in the amount of parental involvement. A study conducted by Amato (1994) addressed the decline of parental participation in school functions and activities at a middle school. There was also a low level of parental involvement and/or interest. A

one-year program was designed to motivate and involve parents in their children's education. As a result, PTO membership and attendance significantly increased (Amato, 1994).

One way to encourage parental involvement is to hold parent workshops. This is true for parents of both deaf and hearing children. Marotto (1995) supported the idea of inviting parents to attend socials, training sessions for working with their children, volunteering to help with class activities, and engaging in parent-child sessions. Non-threatening activities, such as the above, are ways that parents can become actively involved in their child's education. Parents can use information from the workshops to create activities for the home. Home activities provide a relaxed setting for parents and children and increase parent-child interactions. Parental involvement reinforces the importance of school to children.

Parents of children who are deaf have an additional responsibility in the process of parental involvement. There is the legal requirement for parents to be actively involved in the planning of each child's education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which was known formerly as Public Law 94-142, is a federal law which mandates that parents play an active role in the process used to make any educational decisions about their child.

Method

Subjects were 41 hearing parents from Bucks County, PA. The parents who participated in this study did not have a hearing loss. Parents had children

who were either deaf or hearing. The children ranged in age from 5 years old to 12 years old. Parents were randomly selected from two populations. The parents of deaf children were from an Intermediate Unit in Bucks County, PA. A total of 13 parents participated in the deaf population. The parents of the hearing children were from an elementary school in Bucks County, PA. A total of 28 parents participated in the hearing population.

This study used a twenty-three question survey which consisted of eight demographic questions and fifteen research related questions. The survey was adapted from two surveys that were designed by Iglitzin & Wandschneider (1994) and Morrison (1994). A sample question for the research was: Do you communicate with your child about things that happen at school?

Procedure

All parents received a survey from their children. The surveys were distributed in school and sent home with both the deaf and hearing children. The parents were asked in writing to participate in the research study. They were informed that all information would be strictly confidential and that they could withdraw at any time. A survey was attached to the letter. Parents were instructed to return the completed survey in an enclosed self-addressed envelope. The surveys were color coded. Blue surveys were sent to the parents of deaf children. Yellow surveys were sent to the parents of hearing children. The parents completed the survey by responding to the eight demographic questions and checking "yes" or "no" for the research related questions. The

surveys were completed by thirteen parents of deaf children and twenty-eight parents of hearing children.

Results

Was there a difference in hearing parents' involvement in their deaf child's education vs. hearing parents' involvement in their hearing child's educations? Results showed that both groups were actively involved in their child's education. An independent t-test was used to determine the significance of the research results. The t-test indicated a negligible statistical difference between parental involvement in their deaf child's education vs. parental involvement in their hearing child's education. The parents of deaf children had a t-value of 0.1105. The standard deviation for the parents of the deaf children was 0.37747456. The parents of hearing children had a t-value of 0.1095. The standard deviation for the parents of the hearing children was 0.38837216.

An item-by-item statistical analysis of the data was performed. The results indicated a difference between the two groups in the area of classroom observation and classroom volunteerism. The parents of the deaf children observed their children somewhat more in the classroom than the parents of the hearing children. The parents of the hearing children volunteered in the classroom somewhat more than the parents of the deaf children.

Discussion

The principal finding of this study was that there was no significant difference between the involvement of hearing parents in their deaf child's

education and parents' involvement in their hearing child's education. This study, unlike others, most indicated parents were actively involved in their child's education. One possible explanation for these results was that parents have realized the importance of participation in educational centered activities.

Another finding of the study was the difference in classroom observation between the two groups. Parents of deaf children observed in the classroom more than parents of hearing children. A possible explanation for this maybe that parents of deaf children felt a sense of helplessness, or a need for data for decision-making in the IEP process.

A third finding of the study was the difference in classroom volunteerism between the two groups. Parents of hearing children volunteered in the classroom more than parents of deaf children. A possible explanation for this may be that parents of hearing children felt more at ease in participating and interacting with their hearing child's educational program. Some suggestions for increasing parental involvement include:

1. Support groups
2. Buddy system
3. Parent Inservice
4. Newsletters
5. Sign classes
6. Parental tutoring
7. "Home" books
8. "Home" curriculum
9. Social activities
10. Re-unions

Teachers have expressed a major concern about the decrease in parental involvement (Roebusk-Shepski, 1995), but a new trend may be emerging. The

education of all children is a shared responsibility between parents, teachers and children. Effective communication is an imperative factor in this process.

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